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ABSTRACT

Thailand has dramatically increased access to education in the past 25 years; however, like many other developing nations, the country now faces the pressing need to improve educational quality--especially at the primary level. To improve Thailand's primary school quality, the quality of teaching and school administration must be improved. Some policy initiatives attempting to accomplish this goal were designed to make teachers and principals accountable for student academic achievement; others focused on building teacher and principal knowledge capacities and on stimulating quality instruction and administrative leadership. An examination of nine important initiatives enacted during the 1970s through the mid-1980s revealed three patterns of implementation and success. Strong, united central government support was an important factor in initiatives that produced behavior changes. Additionally, desired effects were achieved if the initiative content met the needs of those affected and if participatory social relations during implementation subsequently appeared in classroom social relations. The accountability approach, currently prominent in Thai schools, may negatively affect long-term, self-sustaining school improvement. Creating a balance between accountability and capacity-building strategies of educational improvement offers a promising avenue for resolving the difficulties of reform and for future policy implementation. (33 references) (KM)

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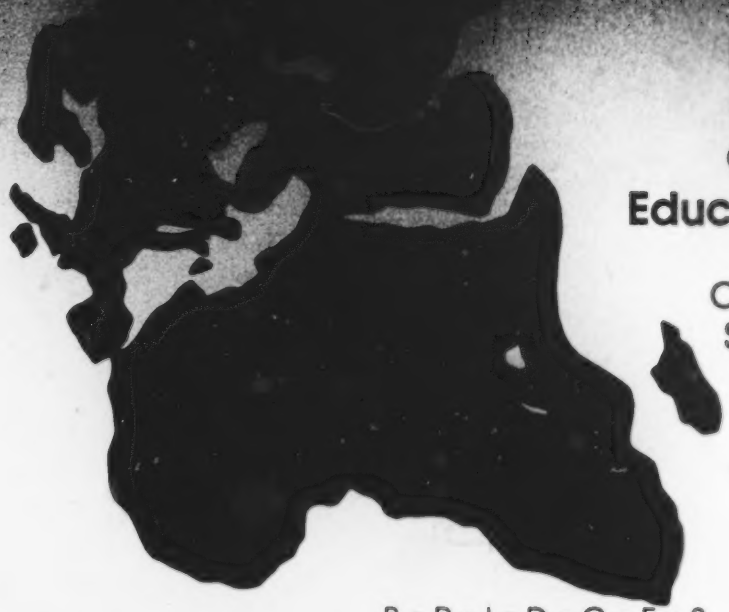

An Essay on Implementation, Constraints, and Opportunities for Educational Improvement

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Stephen Raudenbush
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EA 021 523

B • R • I • D • G • E • S
Basic Research and Implementation in DevelopinG Education Systems

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The BRIDGES Group includes educators, researchers, planners and policymakers committed to improving opportunity and quality in Thirld World schools. The goal of their collaborative effort is to identify policy options that will increase children's access to schooling, reduce the frequency of early school leaving and repetition, improve the amount and quality of what is learned, and optimize the use of fiscal and educational resources.

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BRIDGES RESEARCH REPORT SERIES June 1989 No. 5

Policy Initiatives to Improve Primary School Quality in Thailand: An Essay on Implementation, Constraints, and Opportunities for Educational Improvement

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Foreword

Research and policy analysis can make an important contribution to the design of policies to improve education, but their eventual impact and efficiency depend on how they are implemented. Although managers of education systems have always been concerned about implementation, their perspectives have changed over time. Between 1950 and 1975 most countries chose centralized planning as the most effective way to achieve development goals. The timely supply of personnel and physical materials was the major concern of management in education systems. Little or no attention was given to how supervisors, headmasters, and teachers actually carried out educational policies.

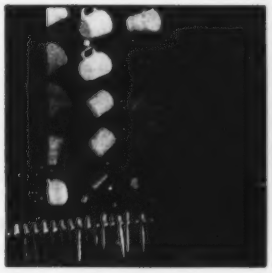
Plan after plan failed. At first the assumption was that the quality of planning had been poor, and renewed effort went into technical advances in planning. Later it became clear that most plans had not been carried out as written, that assumptions about the capability of supervisors, principals, and teachers to implement programs were mistaken. The major problem of education management was now defined as the motivation and training of those who actually implement plans. Some central planners erred by emphasizing goals and methods and ignoring the actual process of education. Some of those who attacked planning erred by insisting that process is everything, that specification of content is unimportant.

Both perspectives are partial views, not only because both planning and process are important, but because there are other factors that must be taken into account for implementation to succeed. Managers have to recognize the important contributions to implementation made by those affected by education (not just students, teachers, and principals, but also parents, communities, employers, and political parties). Education operates in a social context, and must be articulated with it. The task of articulation is difficult, because of competing demands made upon the education system. Some of those affected by any given education policy may be beneficiaries, in the sense that the outputs of education help them achieve their objective. But other groups may believe they are affected negatively, and act to block implementation.

What we require, therefore, is a framework for understanding the dialectics of implementation of education policy. On one hand, implementation requires commitment from the leaders of the country; on the other hand it requires commitment from their followers. Implementation requires inputs and must generate outputs. The inputs must be distributed, and the outputs must be seen as received. Implementation requires mobilization of those who will be served (e.g., the community), and those who will serve.

Each of these dyads develops in a dynamic context in which success in one moment creates conditions that in another moment limit achievement of objectives. The clarification of goals required for political commitment focuses opposition. The allocation of resources stimulates competing demands. The mobilization of the implementors (teachers and principals) takes their attention away from other important tasks. Mobilization of beneficiaries (employers, community, and students) creates expectations which, when not immediately met, lead to lack of support. As expectations are met, there is an escalation of expectations, which creates new demands on the system.

Education operates in a social context, and must be articulated with it. The task of articulation is difficult, because of competing demands made upon the education system.



This paper contributes to our understanding of implementation at the level of the classroom. Wheeler, Raudenbush, and Pasigna focus especially

on the tension between accountability as a mechanism for management, and on capacity-building as a mechanism for mobilization. By accountability they mean the imposition of norms and goals, and the use of external assessment devices to insure that these norms and goals are being followed and met. Accountability is a centrally imposed device, linked closely to planning.

Capacity-building includes training, but also the development of forms of governance in which principals and teachers have more choice not only about how they will pursue objectives, but also about which objectives will be pursued. Through capacity-building teachers increase their autonomy, which is expected to result in enhanced sensitivity and creative response to varying local conditions.

Both accountability and capacity-building are necessary for effective teaching, but as a system develops, the balance point between them can shift. What was acceptable practice (for example, with respect to intensity of supervision) in one stage is now rejected by teachers as inappropriate. At the same time, at the national level, political trends push the central system to demand more from teachers.

Through a detailed analysis of various innovations in the education system of Thailand, the authors illustrate some of the various forces that can operate to effect the implementation of education policies. The paper compares innovations aimed directly at the teaching-learning process in the classroom, and those intended to affect learning through improvements in school management. Within each of these kinds of innovations Wheeler, Raudenbush, and Pasigna identify efforts to increase accountability, and efforts to increase capability. They show how resolution of the tension–between the development of teachers as highly-skilled autonomous professionals, and the desire of system managers to monitor school performance–leads to improved quality of education.

The balance point in Thailand is not, the authors point out, that which will be most effective in other cultures. They comment on how Thai culture tends to dispose many persons to favor central control. But there is a balance point, and understanding the tensions inherent in program implementation can enhance our capacity to improve the quality of education.

Noel F. McGinn

June 6, 1989

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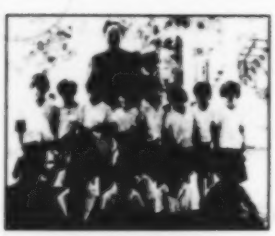

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Executive Summary

Like other developing nations, Thailand in the past 25 years has dramatically increased access to education, and, like other countries, now faces the pressing need to improve quality, especially at the primary level.

In Thailand, improving the quality of teaching and administration represents the key to improving primary school quality. Teachers are an underdeveloped resource in relatively large supply compared to other resources such as facilities, equipment, or textbooks. Principals play a pivotal role in creating and fostering a school-wide atmosphere for effective learning. Given the need to improve schools with scarce resources, reforms that better utilize the existing staff are generally more promising than reforms that require the hiring of additional staff, rely on expertise not readily acquired by the existing staff, or require large outlays of money for new equipment or facilities.

Teachers are an underdeveloped resource in relatively large supply compared to other resources such as facilities, equipment, or textbooks.

This paper raises important questions for policymakers in Thailand and provides the following answers:

• What types of policy initiatives have been used to improve primary school quality in Thailand?

Some are clearly designed to make teachers and principals more accountable, that is, to focus their attention more on the academic tasks of schooling by using regulations, requirements, and hierarchical patterns of decision making and control to improve the quality of education. Others are more clearly designed to build teacher and principal capacity in terms of knowledge, and to stimulate quality instruction and administrative leadership as a means to accomplish the same goal. Collaboration, cooperation, and participation characterize these initiatives. The national testing program illustrates the accountability approach, while interactive staff development programs illustrate the capacity-building approach.

• What have been the results of initiatives to improve primary school quality?

Based on an examination of nine important initiatives enacted during the late 1970s through the mid-1980s, three patterns of implementation emerged. The first involves initiatives that were not effectively implemented, achieved no demonstrable success in improving school quality, and were subsequently discontinued. The second pattern involves only partially implemented initiatives which produced little or no demonstrable effect on quality, but continue to enjoy government support and are presently undergoing modification in hopes that their implementation and results will improve. The third pattern involves vigorously implemented initiatives that have made demonstrable contributions to quality.

• Can we identify factors which increase the chances of implementation success?

For "successful" implementation, we required, first of all, that the new techniques, materials, or concepts central to the initiative actually be used by teachers in classrooms or by principals in their schools. Second, we required that once used, the initiative actually contribute to the desired result.

Using these criteria we found that strong, united central government support, especially by the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC), was important if initiatives were to result in changed behavior. Depending on the type of policy (capacity-building or accountability) we found that either active involvement by those directly affected was important or that the central government had to mobilize and use a wide array of sanctions and incentives if teachers and principals were to actually use what was taught or mandated. Some policy initia-

tives failed to meet these two tests with the result that they were either dropped or are now undergoing major changes in hopes of improving the likelihood that they will actually be used.

Regarding the second criterion, desired results, we found that the smaller implemented subset achieved desired effects if its content actually met the needs of those affected and, for capacity-building initiatives, if the "participatory" social relations that characterized the implementation process appeared subsequently to be mirrored in the social relations of the classroom where children participated actively in learning. For accountability policies, not only did the content have to meet the needs of those affected, but they also had to be implemented in a way that was congruent with certain Thai cultural values.

• What lessons can be learned from policy initiatives about obstacles to the improvement of classroom learning, the difficulties reforms must overcome if they are to be implemented effectivity, and some promising avenues for future policy implementation?

During the 1980s Thai policymakers successfully pursued two strategies to improve primary school quality. By the late 1980s a series of tensions had emerged between the accountability and the capacity-building approaches. Recent developments suggest the accountability approach is now prominent and may, for unintended reasons, negatively affect the ability of schools to generate long-term, self-sustaining improvement. The challenge of the 1990s may lie in maintaining, even recreating, the balance between the two strategies and resolving the tensions rather than simply pursuing a single approach.

Section I: Introduction

In the past 25 years, Thailand, like other developing nations, has dramatically increased access to primary education. As in other countries, expanded access, coupled with a population boom, diverted attention and resources away from the quality of primary education. As the need for improving quality became more apparent, however, Thailand responded with a number of policy initiatives, particularly during the late 1970s and 1980s. This paper analyzes these initiatives by reviewing the available literature in English, supplemented by interviews with key Thai officials responsible for the implementation of these reforms and preliminary results from current research underway sponsored by the BRIDGES* project. Specifically this paper addresses the following questions: What kinds of policy options are available for improving primary school quality? What initiatives have been tried? With what results? Given the changes that have been tried, are there identifiable characteristics for the implementation process that explain and predict implementation success? What lessons can be drawn about how to overcome obstacles to improving quality, especially those which any initiative might have to overcome? What are the most promising avenues for action?

A History of Increasing Access to Education

The period of most dramatic educational reform in Thailand falls between the decades of 1960 and 1980. Certainly, earlier periods are important. For example, King Chulalongkorn, a dynamic and exceptionally able monarch, proclaimed his intention in 1874 to extend educational opportunities to all social classes, created a Department of Education in 1884, and developed a national plan for education by 1895 (ONPEC, 1984). By 1921 compulsory primary education had been mandated for all children. The infrastructure in terms of teachers, principals, buildings, and textbooks, however, was lacking, which meant this important policy initiative existed more on paper than in practice for the next 40 years.

While the legal basis for Thailand's educational achievement in primary education had been created by 1921, its realization (universal attendance) came only during the decades 1960-1980 as shown by the percentage of students who actually attended and completed primary school. For example, in 1960, of those 25 or older only 33.5% had completed four years of primary school; by 1980 the figure had risen to 69%. The most remarkable fact, however, is that expanded participation occurred at the same time that Thailand's population was nearly doubling–from 26 million to 44 million (Wyatt, 1984). Not only was educational opportunity expanding, but it was expanding exponentially. Currently 96% of every age cohort is enrolled in primary school.

History, however, is full of paradoxes. Thailand's very success in creating universal access to primary school brought to the forefront another concern: the quality of instruction. To accomplish equality of access required a dramatic increase in the infrastructure of education: more buildings, more textbooks, and more teachers. Valenti (1979) points out that in the early 1960s 5,000 to 6,000 new teachers were graduating each year from teacher training programs; yet the need was for 8,000 to 10,000 a year. "Assuming a pupil/teacher ratio of 35/1 in primary schools and a ratio of 20/1 in secondary schools," he argued, "the teaching force would have to increase from 183,000 in 1967 to 400,000 in 1987" (p.72). By the mid-1980s, the teaching force for primary schools reached over 330,000 (Amornvivat, 1986). The number of graduates from teacher training institutions doubled and doubled again as newly created teacher training programs began providing graduates by the tens of thousands (by 1970, 31,000 teachers a year were graduating from teacher preparation

Thailand's very success in creating universal access to primary school brought to the forefront another concern: the quality of instruction.

* Basic Research and Implementation in DevelopinG Education Systems, Harvard University.

programs). But the largest increase occurred as a result of candidates passing through the "external examination system" (Valenti, 1979). While this examination system was roundly criticized by educational leaders and Ministry of Education officials alike as woefully inadequate for ensuring that competent teachers entered the classroom, programs of teacher education, particularly the newer ones, also received their share of criticism. Although one can argue about which program produced the least competent teacher, the fact remains: a significant percent of new staff lacked adequate pedagogical skills and sufficient content knowledge.

During the 1980s, the problem of teacher competency took on an added dimension as government family-planning initiatives took hold and the population growth rate fell from 3.2% in the 1960s to less than 2% in the early 1980s (Krannich, 1980). The mid-1980s saw fewer students enrolled in primary school. This reduced the demand for new teachers and made the need for improved teaching even more apparent as teacher/student ratios plummeted to less than 20 to 1 in many classrooms without appreciable gains in student performance. In 1984, for example, the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC), the agency responsible for administering about 85 percent of the primary schools in Thailand, assessed pupil achievement and found that mean test scores were lower than the 50 percent standard required by the government in almost all subjects (Bhumirat, et al., 1987). Clearly for the foreseeable future the teaching force represents an underdeveloped and underutilized resource for improving the quality of primary education.

Improving the teaching-learning process by improving the quality of teaching in classrooms, however, represents only one possible avenue of productive reform. Teaching occurs in an organizational context, as studies of effective schools in the United States and Third World countries have demonstrated (see Schwille, et al., 1986). Administrative policies and procedures play a crucial role in creating or destroying the preconditions for effective teaching. The massive expansion of the primary system necessitated not only hundreds of thousands of new teachers but also thousands of new administrators. Most of these new principals were simply promoted in their positions from the teaching ranks and few, if any, had received training for their new responsibilities. The organizational context of schooling therefore represented a second major area of possible fruitful reform.

In short, current problems, as Cohen and Neufeld (1981) argue, are often connected to past problem-solving efforts. Paradoxically, as Thailand "solved" one problem, that of actual access to primary school, the strategies used made salient a new, more vexing problem, which was how to raise the quality of classroom instruction. The late 1970s and early to mid-1980s have been devoted to reform initiatives in this area, which provide the focus for this inquiry.

Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC)'s Reform Initiatives

From 1980-1988, the Office of the National Primary Education Commission (ONPEC) expanded existing programs in various provinces to the national level, reformed existing programs at the national level, and implemented a series of new innovations (Interviews, March 1987, October 1987, and June 1988). The scope of these efforts included: a national school lunch program (involving community participation) to address problems of student malnutrition; a pre-primary education program to address problems of student readiness; a number of assistance programs such as lending bicycles, providing transportation allowances, establishing school bus and ferry transport services to increase student accessibility to grades five and six; support for curricular innovations such as the Reduced Instructional Time Project (RIT) (designed to help teachers instruct students of diverse ages and competencies in small rural schools); staff development programs to improve teacher competencies in subject matter and pedagogy, as well as programs for selected "master teachers" (academic cluster teachers); programs to improve principals' knowledge of their administrative responsibilities, including monitoring teacher performance in classroom teaching; programs to improve district and provincial staff knowledge of their administrative, financial, and personnel responsibilities; programs to improve parental knowledge of school activities and to stimulate community involvement in school decision making; programs to stimulate student participation in school life; a national testing system to monitor and improve student achievement; a series of organizational reforms to decentralize decision making to provincial offices, district offices, and local school clusters to stimulate local efforts at school improvement; the creation of libraries and resource centers in school clusters to improve the development and use of instructional materials; and various changes in the financial in-

centives for teachers to reward academic success by using it as a criterion for merit promotions and transfers to other schools. (See Kunarak, 1987, for a more detailed description of these initiatives).

The purpose of this paper is not to examine all of these initiatives. There is a difference, we believe, between reforms which indirectly improve the quality of classroom teaching, and those that have a more direct effect on what teachers do in classrooms. Transporting children to school, feeding them lunch, combining age cohorts to create viable class sizes, pursuing drop out prevention programs, developing school democracy programs, and organizing available instructional materials are all important. But each creates only the preconditions for teaching. The initiatives we shall examine are aimed at directly influencing what happens once the children are in school, in the classroom.

Thus we shall not examine a number of initiatives, in themselves important and for the most part highly successful in both their implementation and their effects. For example, the bicycle lending program noted above has proven highly successful in enabling grade four students from very small primary schools to complete their last two years at a neighboring village (ONPEC, 1984; Bhumirat, 1984). School lunch programs have played a critical role in reducing malnutrition (affecting up to 30 percent of Thai youth), in increasing physical and intellectual health, and in stimulating greater community involvement with and support for primary schools (ONPEC, 1984).

The initiatives we have chosen to analyze directly affect the organization of academic instruction in the school and the delivery of academic content in the classroom. Once children are in school, organizing and delivering quality instruction, we believe, become the key issues. If the school fails here, nothing of substance occurs. If the methods of organization or instruction fail to produce gains in student learning (or some other goal), then the policies have also failed.

Specifically the paper addresses the following questions:

- **What have been the results of initiatives designed to influence the teaching-learning process in the classroom and how schools are structured and managed?**

- **Can we identify factors that seem to increase the chances of implementation success?**

- **What lessons can be learned from reform initiatives about obstacles to the improvement of classroom learning, the difficulties reforms must overcome if they are to be implemented effectively, and some promising avenues for future policy implementation?**

The analysis rests on two assumptions regarding "successful implementation." For the teaching-learning process, new techniques, materials, or subjects must actually be used in the classrooms. Second, the attainment of some goal (i.e., more learning, greater retention, etc.) or goals must be associated with changes in teacher and student behavior.

For the school management process, three conditions must be met for "successful implementation." First, an initiative must actually influence the ways in which schools are managed, i.e., the ways principals and supervisors act. Second, these changes must affect students. Our view is that such changes will generally occur indirectly, primarily by affecting classroom practices. Third, the resulting change in classroom process must lead to the more satisfactory accomplishment of some goal (i.e., student learning).

Implementation failures at one level mean that the techniques, materials, or concepts central to the reform were never applied. Teachers never touched the new text; principals never used the new management techniques. Implementation failure, however, can occur at a second level, that of theory, which means simply that the new approaches were tried but did not work.

Hence, evaluating a set of initiatives means evaluating each phase. Was the policy implemented? (i.e. Did teachers use what they learned in the classroom? Did principals use what they learned to manage their school?) If so, did it have the desired effect? If the first question is not answered affirmatively, the second need not be asked.

Finally, a word is in order about the methodology of this study. It was originally conceived as a literature review of policy initiatives in Thailand available in English journals. Its purpose was to provide a team of U.S. researchers with background knowledge of policies affecting primary schools, so they could better assist their Thai colleagues in defining a set of studies on the factors that determine primary school quality. The specific methods for these studies use three research strategies: survey, cost analysis, and field studies. (The BRIDGES/Thailand research project). Comments on earlier drafts, the opportu-

nity to interview key policymakers at the national, provincial, district, and school levels, and an increasing understanding of primary schooling gained from site visits in different regions of Thailand, led us to modify the scope of this paper by focusing on analysis rather than description. Most of the results we report are available in English; some are from studies done in Thai, some from interviews with key policymakers, and some from preliminary findings from systematic evaluations currently in process. We indicate in the text the sources we used.

Section II: Initiatives to Improve Classroom Teaching and Their Long-Term Consequences

In Thailand attempts at improving the teaching-learning process include Reduced Instructional Time (RIT), the 1978 curriculum, and a set of teacher inservice initiatives. RIT, initiated in 1977, is an instructional system that includes materials, a management system, procedures for evaluation, and a philosophy of education that integrates its various components. The 1978 curriculum replaced a thoroughly outdated curriculum that had been adopted in 1960. Conceptual understanding and student involvement in learning were two goals of the reform. Teacher inservice initiatives have ranged from single sessions on a topic, to multiple sessions on a topic, to requirements for additional coursework in a number of areas. Efforts to reform the school management process have included a national testing system for sixth grade students and a subsequent set of district and school cluster testing initiatives for all students in every grade each term; an inservice training program for all principals; new entry-level requirements to become a principal; changes in the authority of school clusters; and certain incentive programs.

Expansion requires choices, especially in terms of resources.

Teaching-Learning Process

Reduced Instructional Time (RIT)

RIT is a complete instructional system. Its principal components include instructional materials based on the 1978 curriculum, a management system designed to ensure the efficient use of these materials, evaluation procedures, and a philosophy of education that integrates its various components. The highly structured instructional materials or "learning packages" are self-contained – i.e., they specify *what* is to be learned (content) and *how* it is to be learned (procedures). The management system provides many opportunities for group learning and peer group activities. Evaluation procedures make use of predesigned criterion-referenced tests that are built into the learning packages.

The goal of RIT is to provide an effective and efficient (therefore, economical) mass primary education by reducing the amount of time spent in direct instruction and student-teacher interaction, and by increasing student involvement in directing the learning process (Project RIT, 1978). It is argued that more students reach higher levels of competence, and do so at reduced per-pupil cost than under the conventional, teacher-centered system. Launched during a period of relative teacher shortage, RIT is specifically designed for classrooms with high student-teacher ratios (Nichols, 1980). By the mid-1980s, when the teacher surplus became a problem for many primary schools, RIT was used mostly in small, remote, rural elementary schools in Thailand where teachers continue to be in relatively short supply.

RIT was initiated in July 1977 as a joint project of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), through its Regional Center for Innovations and Technology (INNOTECH), and the Department of General Education of the Ministry of Education in Thailand. From 1977 to 1979 both INNOTECH and the Ministry of Education provided financial support to the project (Project RIT, 1984). After 1979 the Thai government continued to provide the funding needed to carry the project through a two-phase experimental stage (1979-1981 and 1982-1983) into the current level of implementation. Tryout and experimental data for 1977 to 1982 (Project RIT, 1984) show that RIT accomplished the following results:

- higher levels of achievement among students using RIT instructional materials and procedures than among those using regular textbooks and taught by traditional methods (i.e., predominantly teacher-directed);

- greater equality of opportunity for quality education for students as evidenced by increases in achievement in small RIT schools to levels that matched those of large RIT schools; and

- a positive cost-effectiveness ratio as a result of the reduction in student-teacher interaction time leading to a reduced need for teachers – a savings that more than covered the expense of providing RIT materials and training teachers to carry out the program.

Given its success during the tryout and experimental stages, the government expanded the implementation of the RIT system from an unspecified number of small primary schools in seven provinces in 1982 to 6,800 schools in 72 provinces in 1988 (Interview, July 1988). This expansion, however, has generally been limited to "very small" schools with enrollments of 120 or less where teachers usually have to teach multi-grade classes.

RIT was implemented at the classroom level during its experimental stage (relatively controlled conditions in an unspecified number of small rural primary schools in seven provinces). When implemented, greater student learning occurred. It remains to be seen whether this level of effectiveness can be maintained as RIT is introduced into more schools. Expansion requires choices, especially in terms of resources. As will be shown later, several important decisions have already been made which may affect the long-term impact of the initiative.

The 1978 Curriculum Reform

Widespread dissatisfaction with the 1960 curriculum led to its replacement in 1978. The major criticisms were: rigidity of the course content, excessive emphasis on a strict academic orientation, and a teaching-learning process that emphasized rote memorization (ONPEC, 1984). The new curriculum, implemented grade by grade over a six year period (1978-1983), replaced the old method of teaching subjects separately with a design (see Table One, p. 9) that grouped subjects under four areas for students in grades one to four, and a fifth for students in grades five and six: basic skills (math, Thai language); life experiences (health education, social studies, science); character development (art, music, physical and moral education); work-oriented subjects (home economics, carpentry, agriculture, and handicrafts); for students in grades five and six, a set of elective courses under the general heading of "Extra Experiences" (hours were added to the school day for those subjects which explains the 120% compared to grades one to four). Each heading was to receive a certain ratio of instructional time which changed as a student proceeded through primary school.

Table One: Allocation of Time to Subject Areas Under 1978 Curriculum

Grade:	1-2	3-4	5-6
Subject Area	Percent	Percent	Percent
Basic Skills	50	35	25
Life Experiences	15	20	25
Character Development	25	25	20
Work-Oriented	10	20	30
Extra Experiences	00	00	20
Total	**100**	**100**	**120**

Source: Chantavanich, p. 22

Conceptual understanding was to replace rote memorization; self-study and self-involvement were to replace spoon-feeding as the route to knowledge; experimentation and group work were to replace passivity. Central to this new approach to learning was a fundamental change in the teacher's role: instead of teacher-directed instruction, the primary teaching strategies were guidance, advice, and facilitating (ONPEC, 1984).

A large body of research, including reports by ONPEC itself, shows that this new curriculum has yet to alter the traditional teaching styles of most Thai teachers. Chantavanich (1983) and Wuthisen (1984), in field studies that examined primary schools in the early 1980s, found in the districts they studied that course syllabi, teacher's manuals, coursebooks, and supplementary readings were almost nonexistent. Where they existed, they often communicated content more suitable to the urban areas than the rural. For example, a content analysis of instructional materials by Supang Chantavanich showed the following unrealistic activities: selecting living room and kitchen home decorations, choosing tablecloths and curtains, visiting dressmaking

shops, deciding on proper ways of ironing materials made of cotton, silk, and nylon, to name but a few. When confronted with expectations to teach such content, many teachers just threw up their hands, arguing that it was impossible to teach such activities in a rural setting. Moreover, no effort was made to describe how teachers might modify their practices to make instruction more student-centered. Finally, whatever materials did exist often arrived long after the term had started, an organizational problem that created a considerable burden for teachers. Not only did they have to teach from whatever materials were available until texts arrived, but once they arrived, teachers had no time to read, reflect, and understand what was supposed to be taught *the next day*. Inservice programs typically provided only an orientation to the materials; because they did not cover all the subjects to be taught, such sessions did little to create the understanding needed to teach the new content. As a result, what little change did occur was more because of individual initiative than anything the government did.

While curricular content has improved during the mid-1980s and organizational bottlenecks in the delivery of materials have largely been alleviated, the overall cumulative effect from 1978-1986 has been a failure in policy implementation, i.e., new techniques and materials have generally not been used in the classroom. A number of more recent ONPEC inservice initiatives, however, are designed to improve the ability of teachers to implement this reform.

Inservice Teacher Training

• One Shot Sessions

As government concern in the late 1970s and early 1980s shifted from staffing classrooms to improving the quality of instruction by teachers already in the classroom, single inservice sessions were held on specific topics. While no formal evaluations are available in English, a 1985 ONPEC report on inservice programs concluded that such activities failed to lead to any changes in classroom behavior (ONPRC, 1985). ONPEC has since largely phased out this approach to improving classroom instruction.

• Interactive Model of Inservice

a. "The Improvement of Teaching Efficiency of the Primary School Teachers"

This project, under the direction of Professor Sumon Amornvivat, was carried out by ONPEC with World Bank funding between October 1984 and September 1986. During the last six months of the project, all 338,528 primary school teachers under ONPEC's authority were trained in teaching and learning activities related to the new curriculum.

During training, school clusters were used as sites to reduce costs and time away from classes. The training period had three phases. The first lasted three days. Self-instructional packages were read, "hands on" activities completed, and exercises answered. Specific attention was paid to programmed texts and ways to stimulate effective group participation. The second phase took four weeks and was classroom based. Teachers returned to their respective schools, carried out assignments, and documented results, focusing particularly on strengths and weaknesses of the activities. Phase three, which lasted two days, again took place at the cluster site where teachers presented results of their efforts, participated in group discussions and group evaluations, and completed individual self-evaluation activities. Over 95 percent of the participants expressed satisfaction with this program, and believed it would improve their classroom teaching (Pitiyanuwat, 1986).

Did teachers actually implement what they learned in their classrooms? A follow-up evaluation a year later by a team of researchers (Pitiyanuwat, 1986) found considerable evidence that this had occurred, as Table Two on page 11 demonstrates.

Did the initiative improve student learning? Although many factors could contribute to such outcomes, the initiative correlates with improved test scores, as the section on testing under school management initatives will show.

b. "School Based" Inservice

In 1985 ONPEC launched a new inservice initiative called "school based" inservice. Two assumptions guide this approach: knowledge learned has to be transformed into action or it becomes useless; knowledge has to be responsive to local needs or it becomes irrelevant. ONPEC defined school based inservice in the following way:

> ...training activities provided for existing teachers, designed to be responsive to the local needs and organized by the local educational offices or schools or clusters of schools (p. 5).

Table Two: Teachers Who Frequently Used the Teaching-Learning Activities for the Training in Their Classrooms by Percent from Self-Report, Classroom Observations by Researchers and Interviews with Students

Teaching-Learning Activities	Self-Report	Classroom Observation by Research	Student Interviews
1. Activities to prepare students before class	82.59	59.72	98.61
2. Helping students to be prepared	75.82	68.06	97.22
3. Arranging activities for use in the lessons	72.89	94.44	97.22
4. Use of narratives, current events, and stories	55.92	54.17	88.89
5. Use of charts, maps	70.71	98.61	100.00
6. Use of songs	58.39	79.17	98.61
7. Games	43.20	59.72	95.84
8. Demonstrations	42.45	52.78	97.22
9. Experiments	19.20	22.22	80.56
10. Student modeling of vocational roles	31.31	34.72	73.61
11. Performing plays	16.22	9.72	52.78
12. Using case examples	42.31	40.28	79.17
13. Lecture-explanation	64.69	100.00	100.00
14. Discussion	45.88	69.44	94.44
15. Debate	7.84	2.78	26.39
16. Use of group work	53.29	87.50	94.44
17. Invite teachers to give lecture-demonstration	8.38	4.16	19.44
18. Research in the library	43.31	13.89	83.33
19. Heterogeneous grouping practices	62.74	45.83	66.67
20. Support and encourage student involvement	76.80	95.83	95.83
21. Summarize the lesson	82.33	98.61	93.06
22. Provide extra assistance to achievers	56.73	25.00	95.83
23. Review lesson before class	78.18	65.28	88.89
24. Pretest	36.49	33.33	65.28
25. Posttest	72.87	77.78	95.83

Source: Pitiyanuwat, et al., 1986, pp. 248-255.

The emphasis on local initiative runs throughout the program's description: curriculum, training, and assessment are meant to adapt to local needs; local resources are to be mobilized; and local teachers on the core planning team are to act as resource persons throughout the training program. While the goal of this program is to improve the quality of teaching, a number of objectives are also clearly oriented toward improving collegiality and a sense of professional responsibility among teachers. The specific subset of five goals includes the following:

- To upgrade teaching skills and working capability for all teachers in some several [sic] schools.
- To upgrade teaching skills and working capability for every individual teacher.
- To enrich teachers' experience in view of the individual advancement of their professionalization.
- To better teachers' understanding concerning the teaching profession.
- To provide general education for each individual teacher (p. 6).

Finally, there is a clear programmatic thrust to school-based inservice initiatives. While the method

The objective was to establish more administrative control... by holding provincial directors responsible for the results, and then encouraging them to hold districts accountable.

could be used in any subject area, ONPEC has specifically chosen four projects: 1) the promotion of democracy in primary skills; 2) the school lunch program; 3) the promotion of cooperative activities in schools; and 4) health education to promote preventive health care.

While three of the four areas are indirectly related to what happens in classrooms, the programmatic emphasis on cooperative activities in school is directly relevant to the pedagogical deficit that many primary school teachers in Thailand have. Formal evaluations of this initiative are available in Thai on various components of this initiative, but they were not available for this study so we cannot draw conclusions on the extent of its implementation in classrooms or any subsequent effects on student learning.

• Coursework Models of Inservice

Supol Wuthisen (1984) describes the Community Based Inservice Teacher Program (CBITP) in rural northeastern Thailand. The roots of the CBITP go back to the Thailand UNESCO Rural Teacher Education Project (1955-1974), the Teacher Training Education Extension Program (1968-1974), and several training programs begun during the period 1973-1975 but terminated in 1976.

The CBITP was designed to provide inservice training for teachers already in classrooms in order to meet local development and educational needs. The program was a joint effort of eight teachers' colleges in the northeastern region. Extension centers were established in schools and local communities. University staff would travel to these centers for three days (usually Friday-Sunday) to hold a series of intensive class meetings. Teachers could earn credits toward their bachelor's degree.

Implementation of the CBITP began just as the administration of primary schools was about to undergo a shift from the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to ONPEC in the Ministry of Education. Aside from any issues of principle that might have been involved, the MOI was reluctant to give up jurisdiction, given the number of teachers who work in villages throughout the country and the amount of money involved. Since participation in the CBITP courses could lead to a B.A. and increased status, the MOI gave full support to the CBITP as a means for gaining favor with large numbers of primary school teachers (Wuthisen, 1984). Unsuccessful in its effort to prevent the transfer, the MOI reluctantly handed over the reins to the Ministry of Education at the end of 1981. The effect on the CBITP was immediate and drastic: funds were no longer made available. Instead ONPEC encouraged teachers to attend one of the new open university programs. Such divided administrative support meant that extension centers had to close and a sharply reduced number of courses was offered only on main campuses.

This change appears lamentable. Teachers in rural schools understandably find it extremely difficult to commute to class at a main campus; extension centers were designed to bring instruction to the teacher. In practice, Wuthisen argues, the quality of the courses offered in either place was irrelevant to the needs of the teachers that the demise of the extension centers did not really reduce the quality of the offerings. Ministry of Education officials, especially those in ONPEC responsible for cutting the programs, agree with Wuthisen's assessment of the poor quality of these programs in explaining their decision to terminate funding. They dispute, however, Wuthisen's implication that the programs were not even theoretically defensible. They point out that the programs were designed to provide a means for teachers in teacher training institutions to gain additional income since the salary structure in Thailand requires additional pay for teaching evenings and off-campus courses (Interview, October 1987).

Wuthisen's study was not designed to gather data on classroom use of concepts or pedagogical strategies taught in such courses. The evidence he provides on the quality of the courses as well as the views of the Ministry of Education officials interviewed for this study are sufficient, however, to justify the conclusion that such ideas were unlikely to be implemented in the classrooom in other than individual cases. This initiative, in short, was a failure.

Figure One provides a summary comparison of the various reforms directed at teachers.

Figure One: Initiatives to Improve the Teaching-Learning Process

		Curriculum		Inservice	
	RIT	1978 Curricul.	One Shot	Inter-active	Course-work
Implemented in the classroom	Yes	Generally not (Some individuals)	No	Yes	No
Goal attainment (i.e., improved student learning)	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

All those in the lower third on average scores and those (provincial directors) who had made little or no progress since the previous year were embarrassed and left the conference ready to improve academic achievement.

School Management Process

In this section we examine four initiatives that have the potential for affecting the quality of classroom teaching: 1) the creation of a national test for sixth grade students which subsequently spawned a set of district and school cluster tests for all grades each term; 2) an inservice training program for all principals that included a new set of entry-level requirements to become a principal; 3) the school cluster concept; and 4) certain incentive programs.

A National Test for Sixth Grade Students

In 1984 the Secretary-General of ONPEC asked the Research and Development Division to develop a test for a national sample of sixth grade students. The first year the program began with a pilot in 15 percent of the districts in every province; in 1985 it was expanded to a sample of students in every district and has continued that way ever since.

According to the Deputy Secretary-General at that time (Dr. Rung Kaewdang), the impetus for the test stemmed directly from a need to focus attention within schools on the academic function of schooling (Interview, June 1988). The objective was to establish more administrative control over the thousands of schools that made up the Thai primary education system by holding provincial directors responsible for the results, and then encouraging them to hold districts accountable. In turn the districts would hold schools, principals, and teachers accountable:

> The problem was like this: the control of primary school education in Thailand at the time was very, very poor. For example, there were no training requirements for principals. There was little leadership by the principal because when we changed the curriculum, we didn't train the principal. We only had a very short training program for the teachers. So we're talking about school supervision.
>
> If the principal went into the classroom and the teacher asked some key words about the new curriculum, he couldn't answer. He felt if he stayed in the school he would suffer a loss of face or embarrassment, so he moved out of the school to spend his time in the community, at the Ampur or the district. So when I went to visit schools, the problem was that I could not find any principals who stayed at the school. So teaching was very, very poor. There was no supervision, no monitoring or anything like that...
>
> So if we had a national test we could rank (the provinces). In the first year we publicized the results. This province ranked first on down and the lower ones were unhappy with the result that the test focused their attention more on teaching and learning.

The procedure until 1988 was for ONPEC to host a meeting of all provincial educational directors where mean scores, standard deviations, and two rankings were announced (one with scores for highest to lowest, a second with provinces ranked from highest to lowest based on the rate of improvement from the previous year). Special attention was given to the very best and the very worst of each ranking. Provinces with outstanding scores and those which have achieved dramatic gains make presentations on the strategies they used. During the period of Dr. Rung's tenure at ONPEC each director from a province ranking in the bottom third had a private meeting during the conference with him and key staff from the Research and Development, and Policy and Planning Divisions to discuss the provincial director's specific problems and his/her plans for improving test scores. At that time the agency learned of special needs that might justify additional resources.

During these meetings, the Deputy Secretary-General made mental notes about which provinces needed a personal visit from him to better focus their attention on academic matters (Interview, June 1988). According to other ONPEC officials, these private meetings made the provincial directors "very nervous" (Interviews). All those in the lower third on average scores and those who had made little or no progress since the previous year were embarrassed and left the conference ready to improve academic achievement. Provinces then began to rank districts and to meet with the heads of the district offices on a regular basis to discuss progress. Districts in turn began their own testing systems and began to rank schools and individual classroom teachers according to the performance of their students on tests. It is not uncommon now to find districts allocating additional merit promotions ("double" promotions) to school clusters at the top of the ranking and school principals using test results as one criterion (of many) for recommending merit promotions for spe-

Test results coupled with a national inservice training program for principals resulted in the resignation or voluntary reassignment to teaching of 2,000 principals.

cific teachers.

The results, in terms of higher test scores on the sixth grade national examination, show that schools, principals, and classroom teachers have indeed begun to pay greater attention to the academic task of schooling. Except for 1987 (the most recent available scores), achievement has increased substantially along with the percentage of students who have satisfactorily mastered a given area. Table Three below summarizes the results.

Test results coupled with a national inservice training program for principals (described below) also resulted in the resignation or voluntary reassignment to teaching of 2,000 principals. ONPEC officials view this result favorably, as an indication that principals got the message: administration requires leadership, hard work, and attention to academics (Interviews).

Inservice Training for Principals

A companion project to Professor Amornivivat's national inservice program for teachers was developed for principals. Under the direction of Professor Teera Runcharoen from Kohn Kaen University, the project, funded by the World Bank, provided in-

Table Three: Student Achievement on the National Sixth Grade Examination 1984-87 by Percent, and Satisfactory Achievement by Percent

Subject Area	Mean Scores				Percent Attaining Satisfactory Achievement			
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1984	1985	1986	1987
Thai	49.08	56.84	58.40	56.29	47	69	76	64
Math	33.11	36.52	47.81	46.16	11	18	41	40
Life Experience	44.01	45.69	54.48	50.79	30	37	65	52
Work-Oriented	55.28	57.60	65.83	62.13	55	60	81	67
Character Development:								
1. Attitude/ Feeling	2.88	2.87	2.94	2.91	88	89	92	92
2. Habits	2.14	2.23	2.33	2.30	90	92	96	94
3. Strength	1.65	1.66	2.14	2.06	54	52	86	96
4. Weight	2.42	2.44	2.49	2.08	92	93	94	98
5. Height	2.28	2.27	2.32	2.05	93	93	95	98

Source: ONPEC, 1987, pp. 8-9.

A 1987 evaluation of provinces and districts found that over 60 percent of principals ranked "high" in terms of changed behavior as a result of the inservice training.

service training for all principals in Thailand during a four year period from 1985-1988. Fifteen experienced principals, supervisors from provincial and district offices, and assistants to heads of district offices were recruited for the project. They devoted an entire year to developing, pilot testing, and revising a set of materials that could be used for training and by principals after they returned to their respective schools. Materials included video tapes, slide presentations, and 20 pamphlet-books that described various responsibilities of the principal, provided activities to be carried out during the training, and described a set of projects that could be carried out after the training was over.

The core group, assisted by other ONPEC staff, provided training for all provincial supervisors. Each province then organized the actual inservice programs for principals in their respective provinces at selected district offices. ONPEC staff and several core group members attended each training session to provide an official introduction to the goals, purposes, and expected outcomes, and to serve as facilitators while the provincial supervisors carried out the program.

In contrast to the inservice program for teachers where the atmosphere was relaxed and activities such as composing and singing songs or telling stories followed demonstrations of pedagogical techniques and presentations of academic content, the atmosphere for the principals was deliberately designed to be more pressured and more formal (Interviews). ONPEC officials felt principals needed to recognize that they were accountable for what occurred in their schools. They needed to recognize that this training should be taken seriously and was not just another "one shot" inservice (Interviews).

This atmosphere was created during the first of three phases of the inservice. During this one day orientation, all participants were required to take a pretest on their knowledge of the six areas of administrative responsibilities: academic development, personnel, general clerical and finance, student affairs, building and facilities, and the relationship between the school and the community. (Principals were expected to know these areas since they had received a comprehensive manual from ONPEC in 1983 describing such responsibilities with information on how to carry them out.) In addition to a pretest, overall objectives were explained, directions were given on how to prepare for the training, and questions were answered. In the afternoon, principals received three of the twenty books and worked on exercises during an intensive study period. They were given five additional books to take home and study and were required to complete a series of exercises before the next phase.

The second phase, which occurred two weeks later, lasted five days. Provincial supervisors summarized the contents of the remaining twelve books using videos and overhead transparencies. Principals worked in groups to complete various activities including simulations to solve typical kinds of administrative problems facing principals.

At the conclusion of the intensive five-day training session, a posttest was administered. Principals who failed to achieve 60 percent had to restudy the material after they returned home and were asked to take the test again a month later. According to those involved, as the training sessions got underway in various provinces, word spread about its rigor and principals from other provinces arrived ready to work. According to participants, this willingness to work stemmed less from the requirement to retake the test than from a desire to avoid embarrassment in the eyes of their teachers if they had to return home having failed the initial posttest (Interviews).

Principals were expected to use the material in the 20 pamphlet-books upon their return home. For a year following the inservice, district and provincial supervisors monitored principal activities in light of the goals of the inservice training. Principals who passed the posttest and received good evaluations during the follow-up year were awarded certificates (ONPEC, 1987). A 1987 evaluation of provinces and districts found that over 60 percent of principals ranked "high" in terms of changed behavior as a result of the inservice training (ONPEC, 1987). As seen above, it was during this period of time that student achievement scores began to increase.

Concurrent with this initiative were a number of changes in the regulations governing the requirements to become a principal. Teachers can no longer simply move into the administrative ranks. Minimum qualifications are required, district and provincial approval is needed, and all candidates must complete a training program in educational administration. Rankings for available positions are determined on the basis of test scores upon completion of the training program and the quality of a "mini-thesis" research project on a theme or issue in educational administration.

...reactions of school clusters to the new regulations may not be uniform. Some may focus more on accountability... while others focus on capacity-building...

Cluster Schools

As far back as 1950, the "cluster school" concept was launched in an experimental project to promote educational improvement in a Thai province. Staff at larger, well-equipped, more effective schools were encouraged to assist teachers at nearby smaller schools to improve their pedagogical skills (Kunarak and Saranyajaya, 1986). During the two decades from 1960-1980, schools throughout Thailand were grouped together in clusters in the hopes that voluntary cooperation, sharing, and participation would occur among schools, not just within each school. The cluster school concept, in short, represented a management strategy for improving teacher productivity.

Various reports (Kunarak and Saranyajaya, 1986; Wongkomolshet, 1983, cited in Kunarak and Saranyajaya; and Sudaprasert, 1983) document the limited scope of school cluster accomplishments to date. Formal cluster committee functions are impressive on paper. They include encouraging school improvement initiatives, staff development activities, and programs between school and community; monitoring teacher performance; evaluating principal performance; passing on annual budget proposals for each school; and recommending promotions for teachers and principals.

In most cases, however, only the promotion recommendations received serious attention until recently. The voluntary nature of cluster activity has meant that individual principals retained final authority over what happened in their schools. Without sufficient authority, cluster activity became largely symbolic, at least in terms of the scale of activity hoped for by the government. Until December 1986, the reform was never effectively implemented, although some individual clusters on their own had pursued one or more functions vigorously.

In late 1986 a major revision in the regulations governing cluster activity affected the authority of cluster committees, chairpersons, and cluster office staff. These changes promise to alter the authority relationships of principals to their individual schools in fundamental ways since cluster responsibilities for school improvement, teacher inservice, and staff evaluation have now been more clearly articulated. In addition, for the first time, a cluster office with full-time staff was created to manage those expanded responsibilities.

While no national studies of cluster influence on classroom learning have been carried out to date, a study under the auspices of BRIDGES examining cluster activity in two high-achieving clusters in one region in Thailand provides some evidence on the results of this management strategy (Wheeler, et al., 1989). In both clusters testing played a major role in focusing teacher and principal attention on the academic task of schooling. As a result of the sixth grade national test, district and cluster officials developed a wide array of additional tests for students in all grades that are given each term.. Six "academic cluster teachers" (the equivalent to master teacher in the U.S.), selected from the various schools in the cluster on the basis of their acknowledged teaching skills, were responsible for designing the tests in cooperation with cluster office staff and district officials. In one cluster all teachers participated in the process of test construction and the results were used in a formative way, suggesting areas of needed improvement. In the other, only the academic cluster teacher and other officials were involved in test construction and the results were published, by school and by teacher, as a way to promote competition among classroom teachers to improve test scores. In some schools the results were also routinely used by principals as a key criterion for recommending merit promotions (i.e., "double" promotions).

In both clusters, staff development as well as material development activities were responsibilities of the academic cluster teachers and the cluster office staff. In one, these activities were carried out to a considerable degree, with positive feedback from classroom teachers and principals regarding their effects on both the content taught and the new types of pedagogical skills learned. In the other, there was little activity as teachers, including academic cluster teachers, retreated to their classrooms to concentrate on raising test scores on the next set of tests.

While it is impossible to generalize about other clusters throughout the country concerning the degree of activity in each area, this study suggests that reactions of school clusters to the new regulations may not be uniform. Some may focus more on accountability through testing and extrinsic rewards such as double promotion, while others focus on capacity-building through staff development and materials development. The degree of actual cluster influence through academic cluster teachers and cluster office staff seems to depend to a considerable degree on the internal dynamics of each school in the cluster, a finding that suggests that, at best, the school cluster concept as an organizational management strategy can only facilitate internal improve-

Instructional quality is still finally determined by what goes on within an individual school, specifically within the classroom and between classroom teachers and administrators and among teachers.

ment in classroom teaching. Instructional quality is still finally determined by what goes on within an individual school, specifically within the classroom and between classroom teachers and administrators and among teachers. National government support from ONPEC for the cluster initiative remains strong, however, as evidenced by a number of in-service training programs designed for academic cluster teachers, school cluster committee members, and local citizens in their responsibilities for improving the effectiveness of school clusters.

Incentive Systems

Watson (1974), in a critical review of the Thai primary education system, notes that one major reason better qualified teachers stay in Bangkok or other large or medium-sized cities and towns is that service in rural areas can jeopardize their promotion prospects. He points out that the government has tried to correct this problem by introducing incentives to persuade teachers to go to rural areas, but does not elaborate on what these incentives were.

Whatever they were, they apparently lacked strong government support, for the literature is filled with examples of how the salary and promotion system until recently served to draw better teachers and principals out of the smaller rural schools to core cluster schools and schools in more urban areas (Chantavanich, 1983; Wuthisen, 1984). Credentials played a critical role in securing transfers and promotions: the more course credits or the higher the degree, the more likely a transfer or promotion. Credentialism transformed what could have been actual learning into surrogate learning. Once teachers obtained a degree, they requested a transfer. Pending approval, teachers could even arrange leaves of absence from their base school. Either way the result was the same: rural schools with nominally sufficient staff in fact experienced teacher shortages, and morale among those who remained sank even lower.

In the mid-1980s ONPEC revised the regulations governing transfers and promotions. No longer can teachers transfer at will; they must teach at least a year before transferring to another school in the cluster, two years before transferring to another district, and three years before transferring to another province. For both transfers and merit promotions, student academic performance is supposed to be considered along with other factors. In addition ONPEC has tried to make more specific the criteria for "good" teaching, proposing five indicators to principals and district officials for use in evaluating teaching and transfer requests. (Interviews, October 1977). These initiatives are so recent, however, that the conclusion is justified that the current system remains largely intact. Figure Two summarizes the argument for the school management area.

Figure Two: Initiatives to Improve the School Management Process

	Testing	Principal Inservice	School Clusters	Incentive Programs
Implemented at the classroom level	Yes	Yes	In process	In process
Good attainment (i.e., improved student learning)	Yes	Yes	Wait and See	No

Section III: Implementation Characteristics That Help to Predict Success

There are three patterns in the initiatives described. First, several initiatives were not implemented effectively, in the sense that the techniques, materials, or concepts central to the reform were never applied, and the initiatives failed, predictably, to improve school quality. They were either dropped or sharply curtailed (coursework and one shot incentives programs). Although teachers attended these programs, they rarely implemented the techniques presented in their own classrooms.

Second, several initiatives were partially implemented but had little effect on improving school quality. They are now being modified in hopes that more effective implementation and, ultimately, a demonstrable contribution to school quality will follow. These include the 1978 curriculum reform, the cluster school movement, and incentive schemes designed to encourage teachers to stay in rural areas.

The third pattern involves reforms which actually reached the school or classroom levels (i.e. were used by teachers and principals) and which proved effective. These include: RIT, Professor Amornvivat's interactive approach to inservice training for teachers, the accountability-focused inservice program for administrators, and the national testing system for sixth grade students. It is perhaps notable that a fourth pattern–involving a vigorously implemented reform that nonetheless proved ineffective–failed to turn up in our sample.

Strong central support goes beyond rhetoric to the allocation of resources...

Is it possible to distill from these cases a set of identifiable characteristics of the implementation process that help to predict implementation success? The criteria are: teachers and principals actually using what was taught or required *and* such actions leading to desired results. We think it is. But such characteristics are related to another dimension which we have yet to introduce, namely the type of policy initiative under consideration. If we look at the array of policies we see that some are designed to make teachers and principals more accountable; that is, to focus their attention on academic tasks as a way to increase student learning. Others are designed to build teacher and principal capacity, in terms of knowledge, to provide quality instruction and administrative leadership as a means to accomplish the same goal. The national testing program illustrates the accountability approach, while interactive staff development programs illustrate the capacity-building approach. Some initiatives, moreover, such as the school cluster reform of 1986, are specifically designed to improve both, but our fieldwork thus far suggests that one or the other approach tends to dominate as time goes on. Thus it is useful first to describe the central characteristics of these two approaches and then return to the elements of "successful implementation," since these elements differ according to the approach used.

Accountability uses regulations, requirements, testing, and hierarchical patterns of decision making and control to improve the quality of education. It assumes that teachers need direction from above, especially poor teachers who might otherwise do little or no teaching. Rewards and incentives are primarily extrinsic, such as salary promotions (double promotions). Public ranking of test results is used as a way to stimulate greater effort by individual teachers.

In contrast, capacity-building emphasizes more collaboration and cooperation to improve the quality of teaching. Under capacity-building, leadership emphasizes participation, in the belief that teachers and principals will collectively develop goals for improving the quality of education in individual classrooms. Teachers are assumed to be competent and sincere in their desire to improve. The most important rewards are often intrinsic, i.e., internal, as the result of participation to define and achieve goals for improvement.

To satisfy our first criterion of "successful implementation" a reform initiative must reach the school or classroom level, i.e., teachers or principals must actually use or carry out what they have learned or been mandated to implement. Strong, united central support is required for initiatives reflecting either approach.

Strong Central Support

In an administrative system as highly centralized as Thailand's, one necessary condition for successful implementation is strong, united central government support, including strong support from within the agency responsible for primary education in Thailand, ONPEC. For example, consider RIT. Although formally a joint project between the Ministry of Education and INNOTECH, Project RIT also received considerable support from the Ministry of Interior during its tryout and experimental years. The MOI, for example, helped RIT staff to recruit teachers and arranged access to districts in two regions for the actual experiment. The Ministry of Education, meanwhile, provided senior staff, office space, and needed equipment (Six Month Progress Report No. 1, 1977). Such cooperation was needed because formal administrative responsibilities for the education system rested with the MOI until 1980. Such cooperation, by itself, also represented a clear indication of serious government support, given the normally separate paths ministries follow as they implement policy in Thailand (a point discussed in greater detail below). Moreover, such support reflected Dr. Rung's view that the project's early accomplishments justified Ministry of Education support. Had he not been convinced of its potential for success, his agency would not have supported its continuation (Interview, October 1987). Once the project came to an end, the Ministry of Education assumed the financial cost of supporting the project and not only increased the scope of RIT activities but its budget as well (between 1980 and 1984, for example, the Ministry spent over $1.1 million) (Project RIT, 1984).

Interactive models of inservice teacher training provide a second example. ONPEC indicated its strong support for Professor Amornvivat's project to improve teaching efficiency of primary school teachers by its willingness to negotiate a 23 million Baht (1 million dollars) loan from the World Bank and to use portions of its annual budget for the project. ONPEC saw to it that school cluster committees were aware of their responsibility to host the training sessions and to see that all training materials were available for cluster use at the appropriate times. Regarding the "school-based" model of inservice training, ONPEC launched this initiative with considerable fanfare in 1985 and is now in the process of supporting a number of initiatives using this approach. ONPEC's initiative for principals was also funded by the World Bank, and, as with Professor Amornvivat's project, attendance was mandatory for their target audience.

The national system of testing sixth grade students enjoyed clear support from ONPEC. As described earlier, a wide array of sanctions and rewards were mobilized to capture the attention of provincial education directors who moved quickly to create similar pressure on district officials who in turn responded in similar ways to those organizations down the administrative chain of command. The cluster school concept, as indicated earlier, has long enjoyed central government support but in December 1986, after evaluating the program's strengths and weaknesses, such support was increased through a major revision in the authority of cluster committees, chairpersons, and cluster staff. Several training programs were also launched to help cluster officials, school principals, classroom teachers, and parents understand their new responsibilities.

Strong central support, moreover, goes beyond rhetoric to the allocation of resources, as suggested above and illustrated by a counter example, the 1978 curriculum reform. The commitment of Thai officials at the central level for this reform has been and remains strong, yet its implementation has been largely unsuccessful. A national committee developed the new curriculum over a seven year period; an Education Reform Committee worked to consolidate public opinion behind the reform; teacher training institutions were urged to modify their programs to prepare teachers for the new curriculum; and training courses were conducted on the new curriculum (ONPEC, 1986).

Failure to implement the curriculum occurred because support did not translate into follow-through in terms of resources for training. The 360 million Baht (ca. 15 million dollars) proved woefully inadequate to lead to changes in teacher and principal behavior in schools and classrooms (Interview, June 1988).

The lack of strong united government support, not only between and among ministries but also within ONPEC, can spell the doom of any reform initiative. As noted earlier the Community Based

Active student involvement in experimental RIT classes... mirrored their teachers' active involvement in the implementation of the reform.

Inservice Teacher Program (CBITP) got caught in an administrative province struggle between ONPEC in the Ministry of Education and the Department of Local Administration in the Ministry of Interior. As a result the program saw its funding withdrawn and support given to alternative institutions (the Open University). ONPEC proposals to encourage good teachers and administrators to stay in small rural primary schools have yet to receive a favorable hearing from other more powerful agencies. Only the most dedicated (and skillful) political leadership could possibly lead to agreement among the different agencies responsible for personnel policies in Thailand and the implementation of a new incentive system over the entrenched one. ONPEC leadership for changes in this area, however, has only come recently, too late to have created any meaningful change to date.

Involvement of Those Affected in the Planning and Implementation Phases and the Use of Sanctions and Incentives

The importance of strong, united central support for successful implementation represents only the first step in getting the policy to be used; it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The second step depends on the approach that underlies the particular policy initiative: capacity-building or accountability. Capacity-building policies require involvement by those directly affected during the planning and implementation phases if they are to result in changed behavior.

Capacity-Building Policies

The experimental phase of RIT illustrates the theme of involvement. During the first half of 1977 eleven supervisors from the Department of General Education and 41 teachers worked with Project RIT staff to adapt the approach to the Thai context, specifically in the area of curricular design (Project RIT, 1984). During the latter half materials were field tested by RIT staff and collectively revised. Between 1979 and 1981 ten schools took part in the first phase of the experiment. A ten day inservice training program by Project staff prepared teachers in these schools for this new initiative. Each phase was examined: curriculum, group learning, evaluation, and remediation. Between 1982 and 1983 the project was expanded to 700 primary schools in rural areas and 32 secondary schools. Again "on-the-job" training was used to train teachers to implement the model. The evaluation report (Project RIT, 1984) noted that this kind of inservice "has proved to be very effective as the supervisors (and teachers) have a chance to put theories, which they have learned, into practice. They are able to try out their design and materials in real situations [sic] in schools" (p.31).

As the pilot phase of the project came to a close and the implementation phase began, a change of potentially great significance for the future success of this initiative was introduced. Instead of providing a classroom model that involves teachers directly in trying out materials and receiving feedback on their performance, the project as it is now being institutionalized provides only a training package consisting of a cassette tape, a sample of instructional materials, and a workbook for new teachers (Project RIT, 1984). Teachers are to use this self-instructional package and are to answer questions on an exam that is scored centrally by the Ministry. (Those scoring below 80 percent receive greater supervision than those scoring above 80 percent) (Project RIT, 1984).

The RIT experience illustrates how both the process of implementation and the content of a reform can evolve under the pressure of institutionalization. During the experimental stage, RIT involved teachers in developing materials and in testing them in the classroom. In a very real sense, the teachers helped create the content of the reform during its implementation, and this active learning process motivated them to use the techniques in a sustained way thereafter. Active student involvement in experimental RIT classes, which contradicted the teacher-centered relations of conventional Thai classrooms, mirrored their teachers' active involvement in the implementation of the reform.

Changes in the training process may reduce the chances for comparable levels of success in the schools where RIT has recently been introduced. Interview data from a BRIDGES study of RIT currently in progress shows that provincial administrators responsible for RIT believe this to be the case (Pasigna, forthcoming). Moreover, schools that have used RIT for a number of years are now dependent entirely on the ability of experienced teachers or the principal to train teachers who have recently come to the school. Finally, as noted earlier, RIT is a program designed in part to reduce the number of teachers in a school and is thus best suited for small, rural schools that either have difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers or do not have the enrollments to

When teachers lack the opportunity to learn the concepts behind the curriculum they are supposed to teach, they don't teach it, or if they do, they teach it poorly.

justify a teacher for every grade. Thus the program is unlikely to expand to more than 20 percent of the primary schools (its current projected expansion). Its materials, however, could be used more widely. Because of their cost this is also unlikely to occur. For example, in grade one, the RIT learning package of 23 books cost 88 Baht (approximately $3.50), whereas the approved set of six textbooks for the same grade costs only 33 Baht (about $1.25) (Pasigna, forthcoming).

Turning to a second set of initiatives, interactive models of inservice teacher training, we again see the important role collaboration among these officials played in creating the district results. One of the mottos of Professor Amornvivat's inservice program, for example, takes up this theme explicitly:

> It is said that in teaching showing through actual doing only once is worth more than telling how to do it ten times (ONPEC, 1985, p.3).

The format necessitated active involvement by teachers in completely "hands on" activities and exercises to test their understandings of self-instructional packages. The second phase allowed teachers to try out what they had learned, and the third phase, to share their results with peers and project trainers. In so doing teachers took ownership of what they had learned since they could speak from practical experience about the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum. They also learned from others how to improve activities that had not been successful. Similarly, with the new "school-based" initiatives considerable emphasis is given to meaningful local participation: a core group of teachers from the cluster reviews materials sent from ONPEC, discusses objectives and training strategies in terms of local conditions, and plans how to implement the sessions. For each school building there is a team that implements specific training sessions and encourages teachers to carry out various activities in their classrooms and to communicate their reactions to the committee.

Efforts to implement the 1978 curriculum and to train teachers through "one shot" inservice initiatives or university courses, we have seen, failed in part because those directly affected were not involved in the design and implementation of these efforts. For the 1978 curriculum, what few inservice programs occurred during the first few years used a teacher-directed lecture format that provided few insights and considerable disengagement.

An interview in Chantavanich's study captured these problems:

> Some syllabi such as those for Thai launguage and arithmetic are very good but I don't understand the other subjects. When we went to the orientation, we were forced to attend only one area of exposure...(p.70).

When teachers lack the opportunity to learn the concepts behind the curriculum they are supposed to teach, they don't teach it, or if they do, they teach it poorly. One inservice session for the 1978 curriculum observed by Chantavanich's research team was devoted to "cooperation." Instead of explaining the concept of teamwork, critical to effective group work, the instructor just lectured on various ways of defining cooperation. Once back in the classroom, teachers who attended that session lacked any real understanding of how to create teamwork, so they just continued using a lecture format.

While available sources do not show whether teachers were involved in the work of the National Committee that developed the new curriculum, we do know that their involvement in the dissemination phase was only passive. They attended what few sessions there were to receive information, not to participate in its design or to receive assistance in how to fit the curriculum to the needs of their respective classrooms. As we have seen, principals received no inservice training at all, which undermined their ability to provide leadership in the school for academic affairs.

For "one shot" inservice sessions, teachers also had virtually no involvement in the design phase of the sessions and little or no participation during the training. Generally they sat and listened to speaker after speaker. As Dr. Rung, then Deputy Secretary-General of ONPEC, put it in a 1985 speech: "Such lectures...were not responsive to teachers...only to the lecturers" (ONPEC, 1985, p.59). Since there was no follow-up to help teachers make sense of what they had learned in terms of their own classroom settings, much of what they learned was never tried but rather soon forgotten (ONPEC, 1985).

University courses proved no better. As Wuthisen shows, CBITP courses were taught using a teacher-centered approach. Students had no input into content and were given only lectures.

The capacity-building policies seem to require (and seem to result in) more active student involvement in the learning process.

Accountability Policies

Turning to the accountability approach we see that participation by those affected is much less important. More important is the ability of the national government, specifically ONPEC, to mobilize and to use a wide array of sanctions and incentives on those who are directly affected. The testing initiative provides a pristine example. The policy was clear, simple, and backed by every available method of coercion and reward available to ONPEC: national meetings with all provincial directors; public rankings; private meetings with senior ONPEC officials; follow-up visits by the Deputy Secretary-General and his staff; reports of success stories; rewards (ranging from double promotions for provinces that improved dramatically to opportunities to attend international conferences for provincial directors who were already at the top of the pay scale); all served to capture the attention of those who were affected. Within a year of the start of this program, a similar system had been instituted within each province affecting districts, school clusters, individual schools, and every classroom teacher. As we have seen, test scores, until 1987, rose dramatically and 2,000 principals are now doing something other than administration.

The inservice program for administrators represents a second example of this accountability approach. All principals had to attend; they faced a difficult pretest over administrative tasks that were already expected to be in place; they had to pass a posttest or face both humiliation at their school and the need to retake the test. They were expected to implement projects from the 20 pamphlet-books they took with them from the sessions; district supervisors were expected to monitor principal performance during the following year. The policy was clear, simple and backed by sanctions; evaluation results show changes occurred in principal behavior.

By way of summary, the successful implementation of policy initiatives requires first of all strong, united government support, particularly by the agency directly administering most primary schools in Thailand, ONPEC; and second, depending on the particular policy approach used (capacity-building or accountability), the involvement of those directly affected or the mobilization of the use of a wide array of sanctions and incentives for those directly affected.

Features of Content that Lead to Desired Change

Once in place, what factors seem to explain why a particular initiative leads to desirable outcomes? For either approach, it seems to be necessary that the content of the initiative address some of the basic needs of teachers (increased competence in content and pedagogy) and of principals (increased competence in school management practices). After that the conditions again diverge according to type of policy. The capacity-building policies seem to require (and seem to result in) more active student involvement in the learning process. Accountability policies seem to succeed if they respond to deeply held cultural values of deference towards authority and a sense of duty. Let us see how this works in the policies we have described.

Capacity-Building Initiatives

During its experimental years RIT provided a clear illustration of how a reform can address such needs and, in the process, can stimulate greater student engagement in the teaching-learning process. Project RIT materials integrated content across the five subject blocks specified by the 1978 curriculum reform: basic skills, life experiences, character development, work-oriented, and extra experiences. For teachers participating in RIT, inservice sessions provided the first effective introduction to the new curriculum and showed how to make it work in the classroom. Evaluation results, summarized earlier, show that student gains occurred as a result.

RIT also addressed the need for improved pedagogy. The rapid expansion in the number of primary school teachers during the decades 1960-1980 meant that many prospective teachers entered the workforce inadequately prepared in pedagogy. "Chalk and talk" methods of direct instruction (where teachers have no instructional objective and simply write points on the board) predominated in nearly 80 percent of Thai classrooms (Suwanketnikom, 1987) with devastating effects on student interest and engagement. Project RIT directly addressed this problem through its student-centered approach to learning. Student interaction based on group learning activities placed the student in a more active role as a learner. Evaluations documented "more enjoyable learning" from active engagement in learning by doing, through group projects and peer teaching (Project RIT, 1984). As noted above, such engagement led to greater learning gains than instructional strategies where facts were enumerated by an unenthusiastic teacher.

While RIT helped teachers overcome pedagogical deficits and enabled them to implement the 1978 curriculum reform, it also improved their under-

Accountability policies seem to succeed if they respond to deeply held cultural values of deference towards authority and a sense of duty.

standing of content and pedagogy (Project RIT, 1984). In other words, the project also contributed to building content knowledge and pedagogical skills among teachers. It did this in two ways: it provided a systematic approach to instructional design and it encouraged teachers' active involvement in the actual implementation of the system.

Project RIT systematically links instructional content, management, and evaluation. Without RIT, teachers with limited pedagogical and content knowledge are expected to function like professional teachers, i.e., to plan lessons, to prepare instructional materials, and then to teach content. RIT provides the teachers with a set of instructional materials that has been developed by Thai educators and has been thoroughly field tested. As teachers use the materials, they improve their own understanding of the concepts being taught. As they use the management system, which creates a shared responsibility for learning through teacher-student interaction around group learning, teachers experience alternative pedagogical strategies to direct teacher instruction, strategies which then become an integral part of their own teaching repertoires.

Another important contribution of Project RIT is in evaluation. Qualitative case studies (Chantavanich, 1983, and Wuthisen, 1984) document in considerable detail the effects of the inadequate evaluation skills of Thai teachers. RIT directly contributes to improvement in this area since it provides criterion-referenced tests for every unit for all six grades. Not only can teachers monitor student progress, but effective remediation becomes possible.

Quality materials, a management system that engages students in learning, and an evaluation component that identifies what has been learned are useful only to the extent that teachers learn how to use the system. Project RIT has demonstrated that it can do this and has shown, at least in its initial phases, that it is a policy initiative that can improve student learning.

Besides RIT, there is Professor Amornvivat's interactive model of inservice training where all the conditions hold. Her "teaching efficiency" program focuses directly on improving teacher competency to teach the new curriculum while the "school based" inservice initiative includes a major component on promoting cooperative activities in school.

Strong central government support, an implementation process that actively involved teachers, and content that compensated for pedagogical or content deficits or increased competency in these areas, created an environment for active, even enthusiastic, learning by teachers. This translated into increased student engagement in the learning process and educational gains by primary students. When one or more of the conditions is absent, the reform initiatives are not "successfully implemented."

Accountability Initiatives

As noted earlier, teachers and principals alike in Thailand lack evaluation skills. A national examination for all sixth grade students provides summative information on student competencies. It provides data that identifies candidates for possible rewards such as double promotions, as well as information on areas in need of remediation. Inservice sessions for principals found their way into management practice in part because the material met a definite need. For example, across all the schools in our current field study of two effective school clusters, principals said they benefited enormously from the content of the inservice program. In fact it was not uncommon for them, upon returning home, to promote inservice training for their entire teaching staff, reviewing the major elements of what they had learned so that teachers would be aware of what the principal was doing and why. As with initiatives under the capacity-building approach, one requirement for successful implementation, in terms of creating desired results, is that such policies must meet the needs of those affected. The means used to carry out those policies are of lesser importance.

The second criterion for successful implementation of accountability initiatives differs from that for the capacity-building initiatives. Instead of requiring more student engagement, or altered forms of social relations in the classroom, such reforms must be congruent with a set of cultural values held by teachers and principals alike. In the Thai case this is deference toward higher authorities and a strong sense of duty. Later in this essay we analyze both these themes in greater detail, so at this point all we shall do is to point out that the Thai cultural tradition of deference by subordinates to superiors leads lower level education officials to accept as right and appropriate mandates such as a national test for sixth grade students. Thai teachers and principals saw it as reasonable that the national government should want such information and believed it was their duty to comply. Regarding inservice training for principals, the cultural element is also important for understanding why the policy led to desired results.

The importance of leadership in Thai organiza-

tional life has a special significance. Given a society based on deference from subordinates to superordinates, a clear system of ranking and the notion of "patron-client" relations within organizations (Hanks, 1975), those in authority are expected to lead and, within broad limits of tolerance, similar in many ways to the British Cabinet (Mackintosh, 1962), those who are led expect to follow. Where leadership is absent, organizational life often degenerates into factionalism (Xuto, ed., 1987) as those on similar levels within an organization often find it difficult to cooperate, negotiate, and reach consensus with each other on a common policy. As we have seen, the absence of any inservice training for principals about their responsibilities under the new curriculum had the unintended consequence of undermining their leadership role within the school. As the former Deputy Secretary-General noted in the interview cited earlier, a substantial leadership void existed in most of the primary schools in Thailand during the early to mid-1980s. Inservice training, in fact, was specifically designed to create the capacity for such leadership. While it took an order to get them there (which they accepted as right and appropriate), once there, it did not take principals long to see the implications of the training for increasing their capacity for leadership, which contributed in a fundamental way to spurring their interest and involvement. The news that district and provincial supervisors were to follow up the training session with monitoring visits to see that practice changed, served to reinforce the importance of what principals learned and the role they were expected to play in improving academic learning.

Summary

The importance of this model lies in its explanatory power. It helps to understand why some reforms never got used at all, why some were only partially implemented and thus required revision and further support if they were to work, and why some not only reached the school and classroom levels but actually produced desired effects. Why was the 1978 curriculum not implemented in a systematic way in classrooms? Besides mixed central government support (especially the low level of resources committed to the project), the process of implementation failed to involve teachers and principals in a meaningful way and the information that was provided either came too late (i.e., textbooks) or proved too superficial to use. Why did coursework and "one shot" inservice programs fail? Both might have addressed the content and pedagogical needs of teachers but infighting by agencies at the central level weakened this program and rote lectures killed any interest teachers might have had. The result was a set of initiatives that never found their way into the teaching and administrative practices of schools.

In contrast, interactive models of inservice and Project RIT combined strong, united government support, participation by those directly affected, content that met the needs of teachers and principals, and increased student engagement. As a result what was learned was used and what was used improved student learning. Testing and inservice for principals reached the school and classroom levels and contributed to improved student learning (by focusing attention on the academic task of schooling and increasing the leadership capacity of principals) because of strong government support, content that met the needs of those affected, and the congruence between the ways the reforms were implemented and key values in Thai political culture. See Figure Three, p. 25.

Figure Three: Components of "Successful Implementation"

	Teaching-Learning Process					School Management Process			
	Project RIT	1978 Curriculum	One Shot	Inter-action	Course-work	Testing	Principal Inservice	School Cluster	Incentive Programs
Implemented in the school/classroom	yes	generally not	no	yes	no	yes	yes	in process	in process
1. Strongly united central government support	yes	"yes" (lack of funds)	yes, then no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no, recent efforts by ONPEC
2. Involves teachers and administrators in a meaningful way in the design and implementation	yes	no	no	yes	no	–	–	–	–
3. Mobilize and use sanctions and incentives	–	–	–	–	–	yes	yes	in process	yes
Achieved Desired Changes									
1. Content either compensates for pedagogical/content deficits or improves pedagogical/content knowledge	yes	not relevant	not relevant	yes	–	yes	yes	in process	no
2. Greater student/ teacher engagement in the learning process	yes	not relevant	not relevant	yes	–	–	–	–	–
3. Reflects cultural values	–	–	–	–	–	yes	yes	–	–

Section IV: Conclusion: Lessons Concerning Obstacles to Initiatives

Monitoring, control, sanctions, and rewards represent one way to improve educational quality. This accountability approach requires little participation in the design of policy by those directly affected; policy simply needs to be carried out. The capacity-building approach rests on collaboration, cooperation, participation, and shared decision making to improve the knowledge of teachers and to create the environment necessary for effective classroom learning. Thai policymakers see these two approaches as part of a comprehensive strategy to improve academic learning. Teachers need to better understand content; they also need to be held accountable for student achievement. Hence staff development and testing are compatible strategies for reaching the same goal (Interview, March 1987). The two strategies, however, also exist in a state of tension with each other and there are signs that the accountability approach now predominates and may have negative consequences for the future development of primary education in Thailand.

...one reading of the reforms is that desired classroom changes must be embodied or expressed in the social relations through which the reform is implemented.

We learned earlier from the former Deputy Secretary-General of ONPEC that a national testing system for sixth grade students was launched as a way to gain some measure of control over a system that was practically devoid of leadership and seemed mired in mediocrity with respect to academic performance. He fully expected that provincial directors would respond by putting pressure on those below them to create a testing system that would lead to improved scores on the sixth grade national exam, and that district officials would follow suit with respect to school clusters (Interview, June 1988). We also learned that principal inservice, programs for provincial and district supervisors, certain changes in school cluster regulations, and new requirements for transfers all reflect a philosophical belief in ONPEC of the need for improved accountability.

At the same time that initiatives reflecting an accountability approach were being pursued, ONPEC, also aggressively pursued a policy of administratively decentralizing decisions and promoting capacity-building initiatives. The former Deputy Secretary-General explains this second approach in the following way:

> ...We are so centralized that we cannot solve our problems. The primary school system is a big system. So when I wrote the regulations and developed all these proposals, I made decentralization directly to schools a key part: schools first, then school cluster, provinces and Bangkok (Interview, October 1987).

There is a connection between decentralization of decision making and the style of social relations in classrooms that he hopes the capacity-building policies will create:

> It [participation by students in the learning process] means they are planning by themselves. For example, they would like to do something, one exercise about an experiment. It means that they should plan it by themselves. Even education itself, it should be carried out by the student because in our educational system most of the students after graduating from grade six leave the school system. The teacher says do this, do that . When they go out, nobody tells them. They have to know how to do it themselves; there is a big gap between life in the school and life in their home. You have to do it by yourself. We think if they participate, this means everything is by them, not by me. [Why is that good?] Because Thailand is a big system. We cannot decide everything, so they have to decide by themselves and select by themselves. This is what we have to teach them (Interview, October 1987).

Why is this focus important? Effective teaching and learning require engagement, participation and commitment, not passivity or alienation. Participation in implementing a reform is a way to adapt specific components to local needs but it is more than that. It is a way to build knowledge of what participation means. Such knowledge, which teachers gain by participating in the reform itself, may then be transferred to the classroom where teachers elicit active involvement of students in the teaching-learning process. Such a transformation of teacher-student interaction is a key issue that Thai officials involved in these reforms referred to often in our interviews. In a very real sense one reading of the reforms is that desired classroom changes must be embodied or expressed in the social relations through which the reform is implemented. That is, to a certain degree, the medium through which the reform is implemented becomes the message about how classrooms should function.

There is a tension between a capacity-building medium and its message on the one hand and the accountability approach on the other. First, the accountability approach is premised on a hierarchical model of decision making in which decisions come from above with little meaningful participation by those directly affected. The medium and the message of such an approach support teacher authority rather than student participation in learning.

Second, there is the matter of time and rewards. Is a teacher's time better spent teaching his or her own class to the exclusion of everything else so test scores can be raised, with a possible double promotion as a reward, or is it better to spend some time in staff development sessions? Since test results provide immediate feedback compared with staff development (which only improves the capacity of teachers to make a difference over time), making rewards and sanctions highly visible provokes competition for a scarce resource: time.

Third, the accountability approach, as reflected in testing, can rest on a rather narrow definition of education, one that emphasizes factual learning over problem-solving skills. Since the teaching of problem-solving skills lends itself to group work rather than teacher-centered instruction, the need to change the social relations in the classroom becomes especially important, which again serves to put the two approaches in conflict. Given these tensions, what evidence do we have that the accountability approach is now in ascendancy and likely to play an even greater role in the next few years? What might be some of the implications for improving the quality of primary schools in Thailand?

During the 1980s, ONPEC successfully implemented a number of initiatives reflecting each approach. But in highly centralized systems, leadership becomes especially important. The former Deputy Secretary-General has left ONPEC, taking with him key staff, for the Office of the Private Education Commission, as the result of a promotion to Secretary-General. ONPEC's resources have now been allocated principally toward initiatives reflecting the accountability approach. The testing system is in place at the national, district, and cluster levels with all students being assessed every term by one test or another. Monitoring and supervision by district supervisors, principals, and certain school cluster officials are now stressed. Meanwhile Professor Amornvivat's inservice program is over.

But there is more to resolving the current problem than simply shifting priorities under a new leadership team. Capacity-building policies face an especially difficult challenge in becoming an established part of the policy agenda in Thailand. Thailand is a highly centralized administrative system with a political culture that supports decisions from above and limited participation. Let us examine both these points.

Thai Bureaucracy

> One way to view Thai government administration is in terms of the bamboo plant. Bamboo shoots are strong. They bend with the wind but do not break. Hollow, they may grow to a considerable height, perhaps by the hundreds in a single grove. But there is no interpenetration between one shoot and the rest.
>
> This is akin to Thai government agencies: ministries, departments, and so on. Each one parallels the rest as it reaches out from Bangkok to the country's 72 provinces and 500 districts. Funds and decisions flow downward in a single agency, and there is no real interpenetration, no effective interagency activity. There is, of course, a clamor for coordination, especially to meet new crises. The unilateral attempts at coordination that are made, however, are equivalent to the "click, click, click" sound made by bamboo blowing gently in the breeze. One bamboo shoot cannot hear the others, at however many points they may touch (Morell and Samudavanya, 1981, p. 70).

The roots of this system, as Riggs (1966) has shown, go back to the bureaucratic reorganization of 1892 which increased the centralization of the regime by creating new, national, functionally specialized administrative departments, each with its headquarters in Bangkok and linked with corresponding field offices at the regional, provincial, and district levels of government. The events of 1932 further strengthened the bureaucracy as political power shifted from the throne to a bureaucratic ruling circle. Since then, reforms designed to increase legislative and elected official control over the bureaucracy have had little success.

In such a "bureaucratic polity" decisions come down from above with little opportunity for meaningful input by those ultimately affected: the teachers and principals.

Political Culture

Centralized decision making rests not only on the power of those at the top but also on the cultural attitudes of those at the bottom. There is a basis in Thai culture for legitimizing the authority of those who rule simply because they actually hold power. Phillips and Wilson (1964) found that Thai peasants "look to their government as a source of gentle benevolent concern," as a body possessed, ideally, of "the attributes of a strong, wise, but indulgent father" (pp. 15-16).

> These generalized virtues manifest themselves in the social behavior of the Thai by their adherence to the belief that the proper manner of ordering specific social relations is by expression of respect. Symbols and gestures of respect from lower to higher status are the very stuff of the actual relationship between persons. Even in the language...differences of status and the respectful aspect of these differences are an integral part of the vocabulary (Wilson, p.79).

Riggs (1966) argues that this attitude is rooted in a metaphysical view of the nature of reality based on the idea of karma and the inherent justice of underlying reality, manifested through chains of reincarnation and the cause-effect sequences which occur throughout life. Thus, according to Wilson, "one's place is a result of one's own will," and "one is therefore ultimately responsible for one's own position in society," (1966, p.7). Wilson goes on to argue:

> The position of a being, human or otherwise, in the universe may be measured by the degree to which he is subject to the will and power of others. This conception is the one which must be referred to throughout the discussion of Thai politics, i.e., the necessary and just unity of virtue and power. Those who have power are good and deserve their good fortune. Power justifies itself (p.7).

Such norms make it possible for teachers, principals, district officials, and provincial administrators to accept, even rationalize, deference to central policymakers.

With this background we now see that once priorities shift, once strong, united support from ONPEC is reduced, the likelihood of the balance tilting strongly toward accountability initiatives is increased significantly because this approach is so congruent with the larger administrative system and the cultural values of Thai citizens.

But we have seen capacity-building policies are also effective tools for improving primary school quality. In addition to improving student learning, they promote certain important attributes within schools which can lead to sustained change and school improvement: a school-wide climate focusing on academics, especially for low-achieving students; teacher collegiality to share and increase knowledge of pedagogy and content; principal leadership and participatory decision making; the development and use of materials across classrooms; and a commitment by school staff to develop meaningful links to its community (see Schwille, et al., 1986 for a discussion of these attributes in Third World countries and Wheeler, et al., 1989 for Thailand).

Just as massive changes in primary education during the period 1960-1980 created a new set of problems, the initiatives pursued during the 1980s have generated their own dilemmas. The lessons of "successfully implemented" initiatives suggest that a balance between accountability and capacity-building policies is important because it can lead to improvement in student learning and create the conditions for self-sustaining change within schools. Whether that balance can be maintained, or even recreated, and whether the tensions between the two approaches can be resolved represent the challenges of the 1990s.

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